

Famous Artists Course for Talented Young People
Famous Artists Schools, Inc., Westport, Connecticut

Section 12

Creative experiments in design

Guiding Faculty

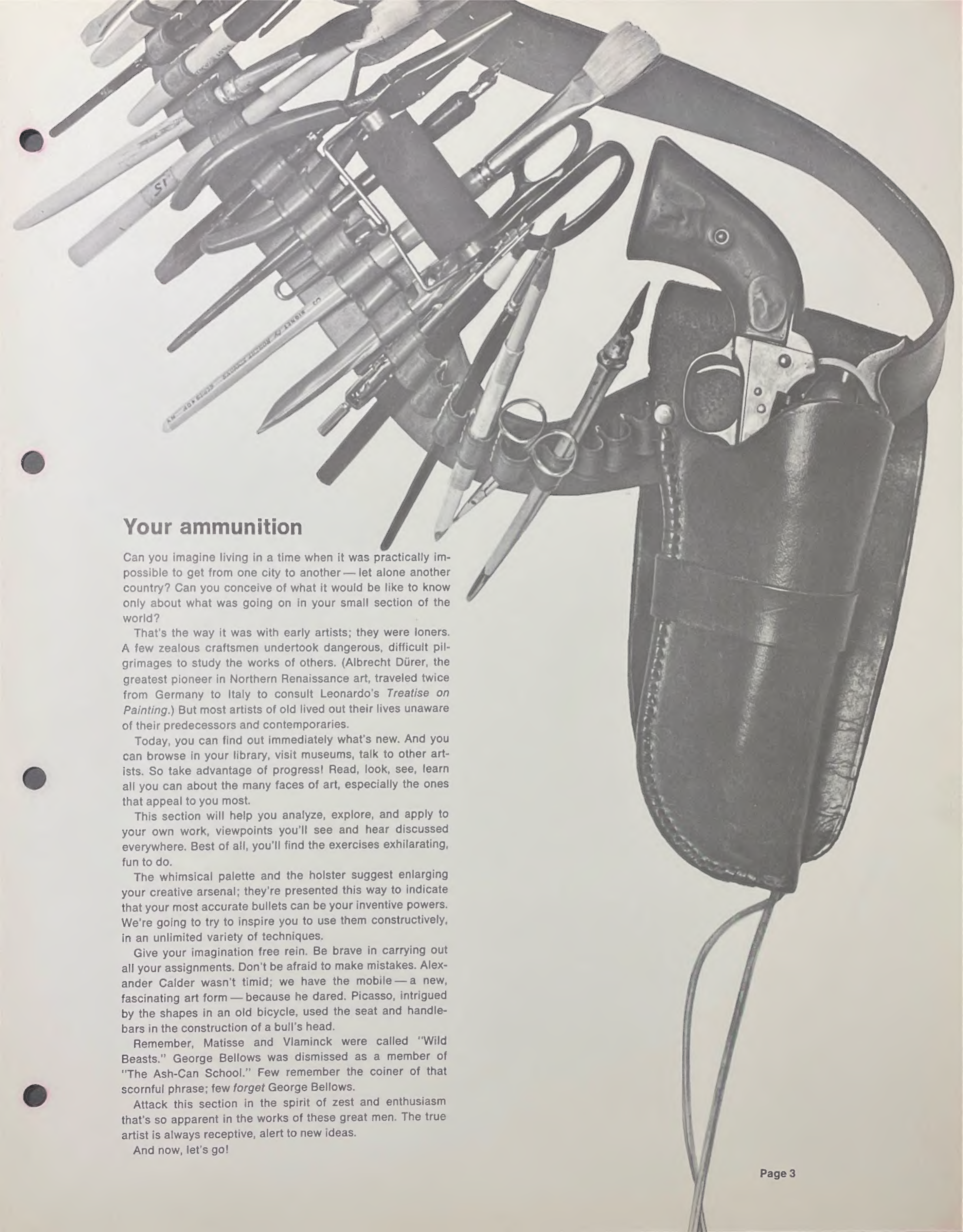
Albert Dorne, Founder
[1904-1965]

Norman Rockwell
Al Parker
Ben Stahl
Stevan Dohanos
Jon Whitcomb
Robert Fawcett
Peter Helck
Austin Briggs
Harold Von Schmidt
George Glust
Fred Ludekens
Bernard Fuchs
Bob Peak
Tom Allen
Lorraine Fox
Franklin McMahon

Ben Shahn
Doris Lee
Dong Kingman
Arnold Blanch
Adolf Dehn
Fletcher Martin
Will Barnett
Syd Solomon
Jillian Layl
Joseph Hirsch

Milton Caniff
Al Capp
Dick Cavalli
Whitney Darrow, Jr.
Rube Goldberg
Harry Heenigsen
Willard Mullin
Virgil Partch
Barney Tobey





Your ammunition

Can you imagine living in a time when it was practically impossible to get from one city to another — let alone another country? Can you conceive of what it would be like to know only about what was going on in your small section of the world?

That's the way it was with early artists; they were loners. A few zealous craftsmen undertook dangerous, difficult pilgrimages to study the works of others. (Albrecht Dürer, the greatest pioneer in Northern Renaissance art, traveled twice from Germany to Italy to consult Leonardo's *Treatise on Painting*.) But most artists of old lived out their lives unaware of their predecessors and contemporaries.

Today, you can find out immediately what's new. And you can browse in your library, visit museums, talk to other artists. So take advantage of progress! Read, look, see, learn all you can about the many faces of art, especially the ones that appeal to you most.

This section will help you analyze, explore, and apply to your own work, viewpoints you'll see and hear discussed everywhere. Best of all, you'll find the exercises exhilarating, fun to do.

The whimsical palette and the holster suggest enlarging your creative arsenal; they're presented this way to indicate that your most accurate bullets can be your inventive powers. We're going to try to inspire you to use them constructively, in an unlimited variety of techniques.

Give your imagination free rein. Be brave in carrying out all your assignments. Don't be afraid to make mistakes. Alexander Calder wasn't timid; we have the mobile — a new, fascinating art form — because he dared. Picasso, intrigued by the shapes in an old bicycle, used the seat and handlebars in the construction of a bull's head.

Remember, Matisse and Vlaminck were called "Wild Beasts." George Bellows was dismissed as a member of "The Ash-Can School." Few remember the coiner of that scornful phrase; few *forget* George Bellows.

Attack this section in the spirit of zest and enthusiasm that's so apparent in the works of these great men. The true artist is always receptive, alert to new ideas.

And now, let's go!



Whale weathervane
Index of American Design
National Gallery of Art, Washington

Out of the commonplace

People of spirit and inventiveness made the things you see here. They prove that you can achieve distinction in your surroundings with artwork of your own.

While most of his neighbors were satisfied with a rooster or an arrow, a sea captain put the whale (above) on his roof to show which way the wind was blowing. Besides serving as a weathervane, the whale graced the sailor's house and symbolized his calling. Today, the carving is still at home in a New England seacoast town.

The pictures below dramatize the work of the designer. Color and typography, skillfully applied, call attention to the box. Its rectangular shape is no different from thousands of other packages, but an effective graphic design makes it stand out on the market shelves. Take the hint! Decorate the covers on your schoolbooks and other belongings; make them unmistakably yours and instantly identifiable.

You can make an original holder for your art tools, too. Get a strip of lead from a hardware store and wind it round and round. If you have (or can borrow) a pair of tin snips, you can cut almost any design in metal — including a gargoyles like the one guarding the container at bottom left.

The duck below was carved from pine. Pick up scraps of balsa or other soft wood and teach yourself the venerable art of whittling. Fashion birds, or whatever you fancy. The simplifying of forms required in wood carving will give you practical experience in the principles of design. Use your carvings as paperweights, or just for decoration.



Serious play

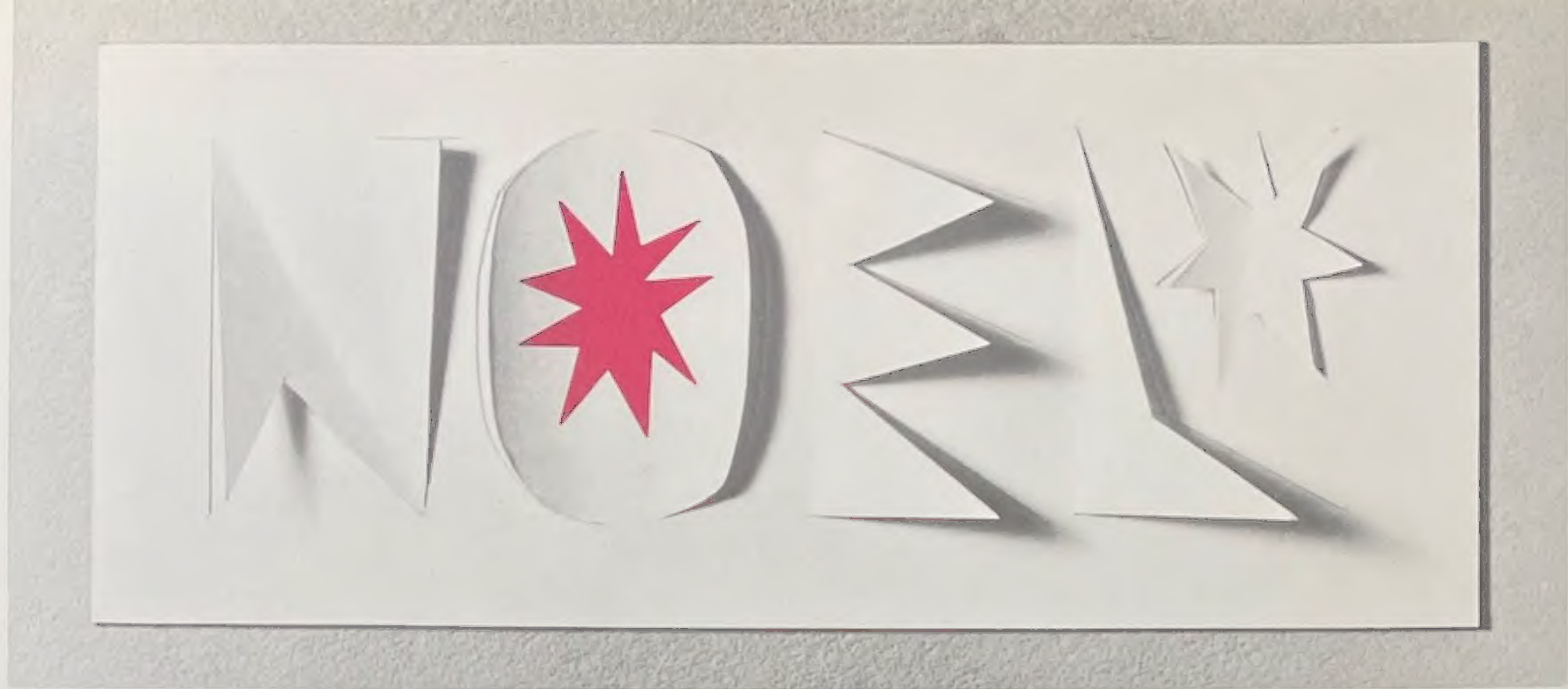
To create the kind of art pictured on page 4 will take time, patience, and lots of practice. But here's a project you and a friend could begin right away and keep working on, in a corner of your basement or garage.

These two young people are assembling their unique version of a totem pole. This three-dimensional doodling is fun and it can teach you valuable lessons about design, balance, rhythm, and stability. Be as free and way out as you like; this experiment should be a pure pleasure. It will be if you let yourself go. The lessons will sink in by themselves as you add to and continually change your assemblage.

The boy and girl began by saving cartons which they decorated — some with paper collages, some with paint. The side pieces are glued on. You might consider slitting part of a carton and folding it outward to create a similar effect. An old bicycle wheel, embellished by a face, is sunk into a groove cut into the top box.

All the materials in this project are discards — including the wood and cardboard in the mobile the boy is about to add to the "sculpture." We want you, too, to surround yourself with as much junk as you have room for, so you won't worry about waste if you're not satisfied with your first (or twentieth!) effort.





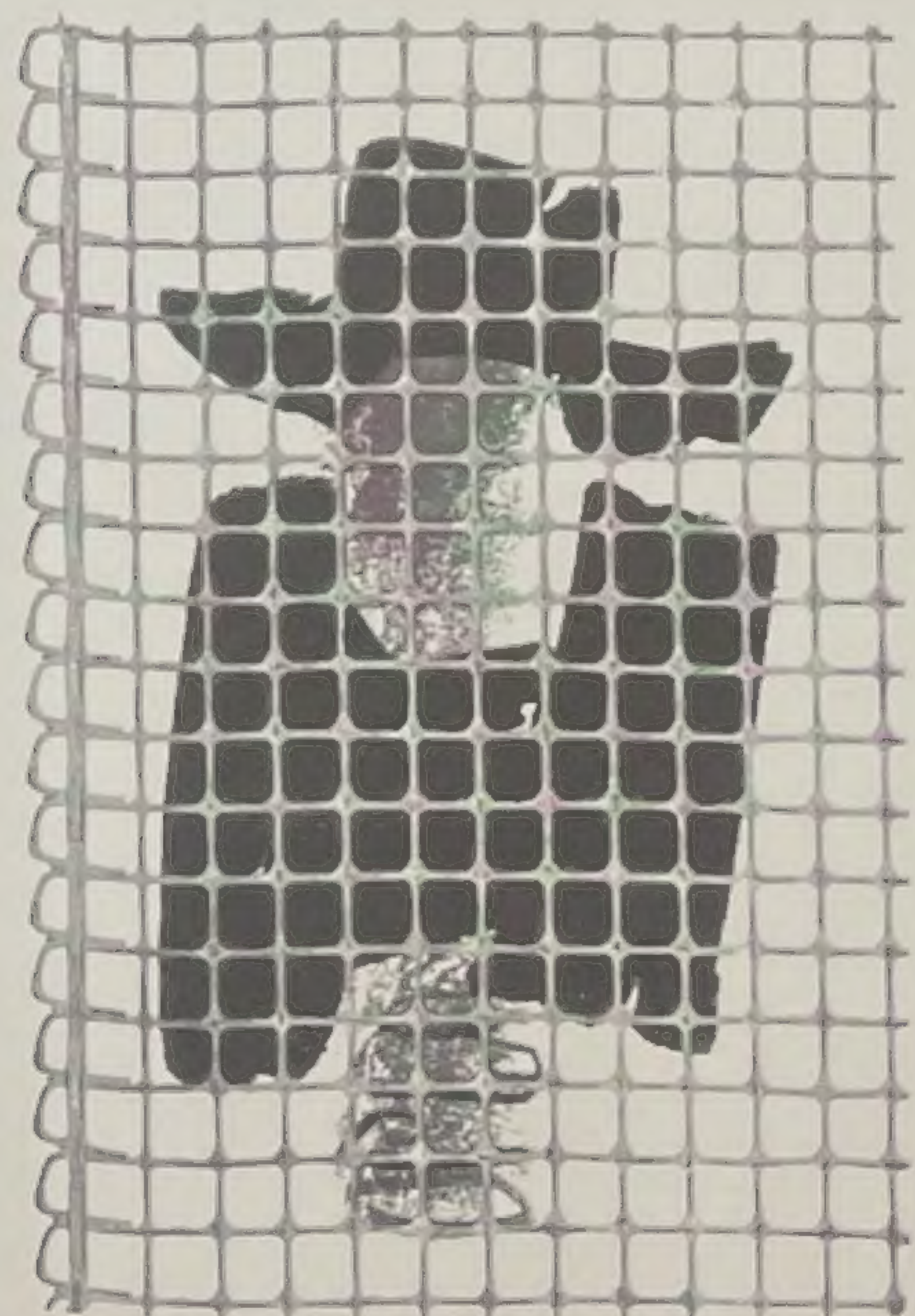
Art from scraps

The artist in you can find opportunities to experiment in almost anything. The most logical (and stimulating) launching pad for your trial balloons is in textures and materials. Use them, as you find them, to create new and intriguing images.

Try variations on all the ideas you get from these pages. Make a greeting card like the one above: all you need are heavy white paper, a mat knife, a splash of red paint — and imagination.

Cut shapes from corrugated cardboard and paste them on plain paper, as we did at left. Add straight lines to give your umpire arms and legs (and an air of authority). Then make a bounding dog from the same material; give him distinctive stripes by brushing paint lightly across the raised parts of the board.

Draw a picture of a bad guy before he winds up on Boot Hill. Cover your drawing with a piece of screening to symbolize a teller's cage and imply that your highwayman is robbing a bank.





More ideas to play with

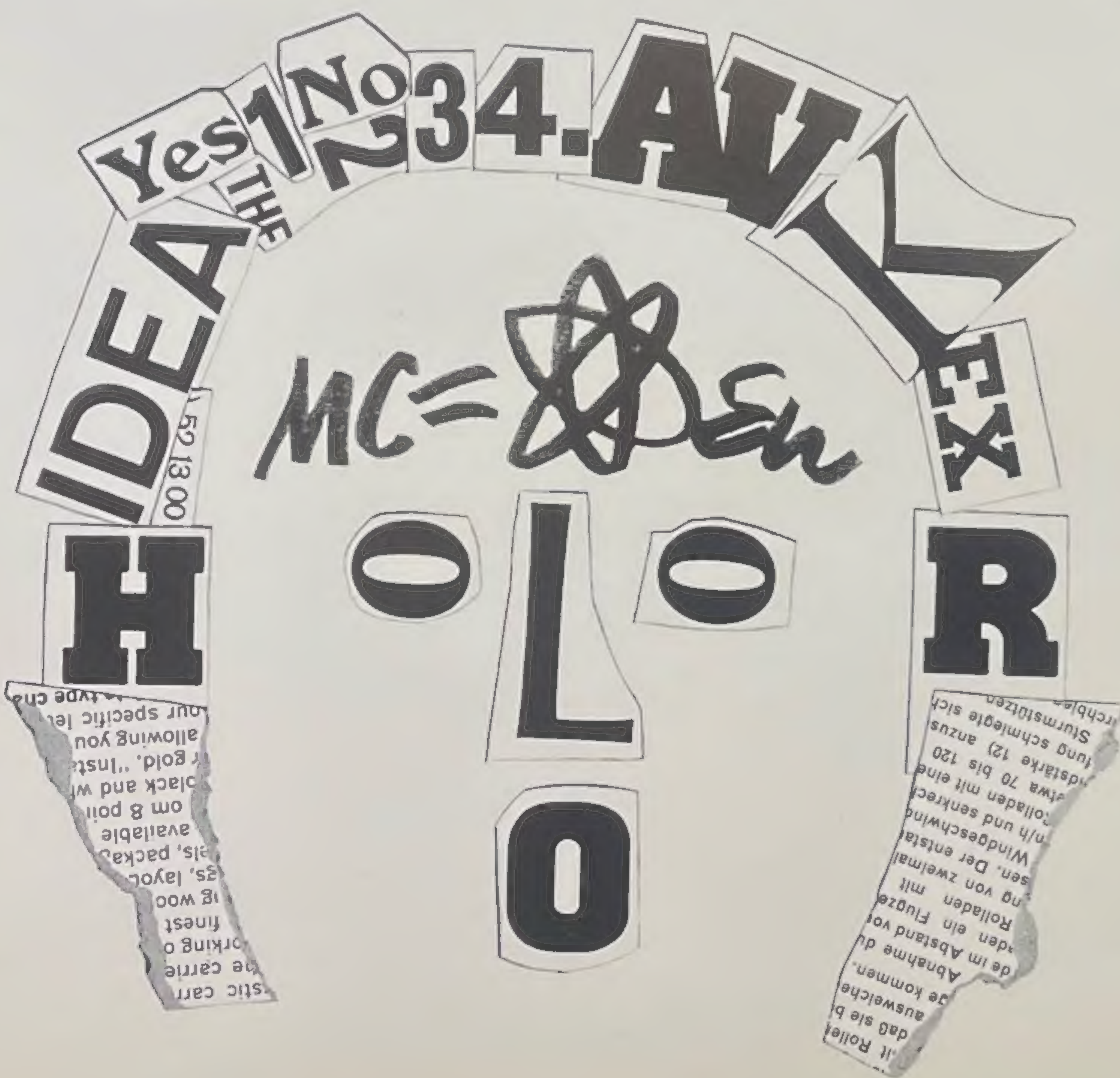
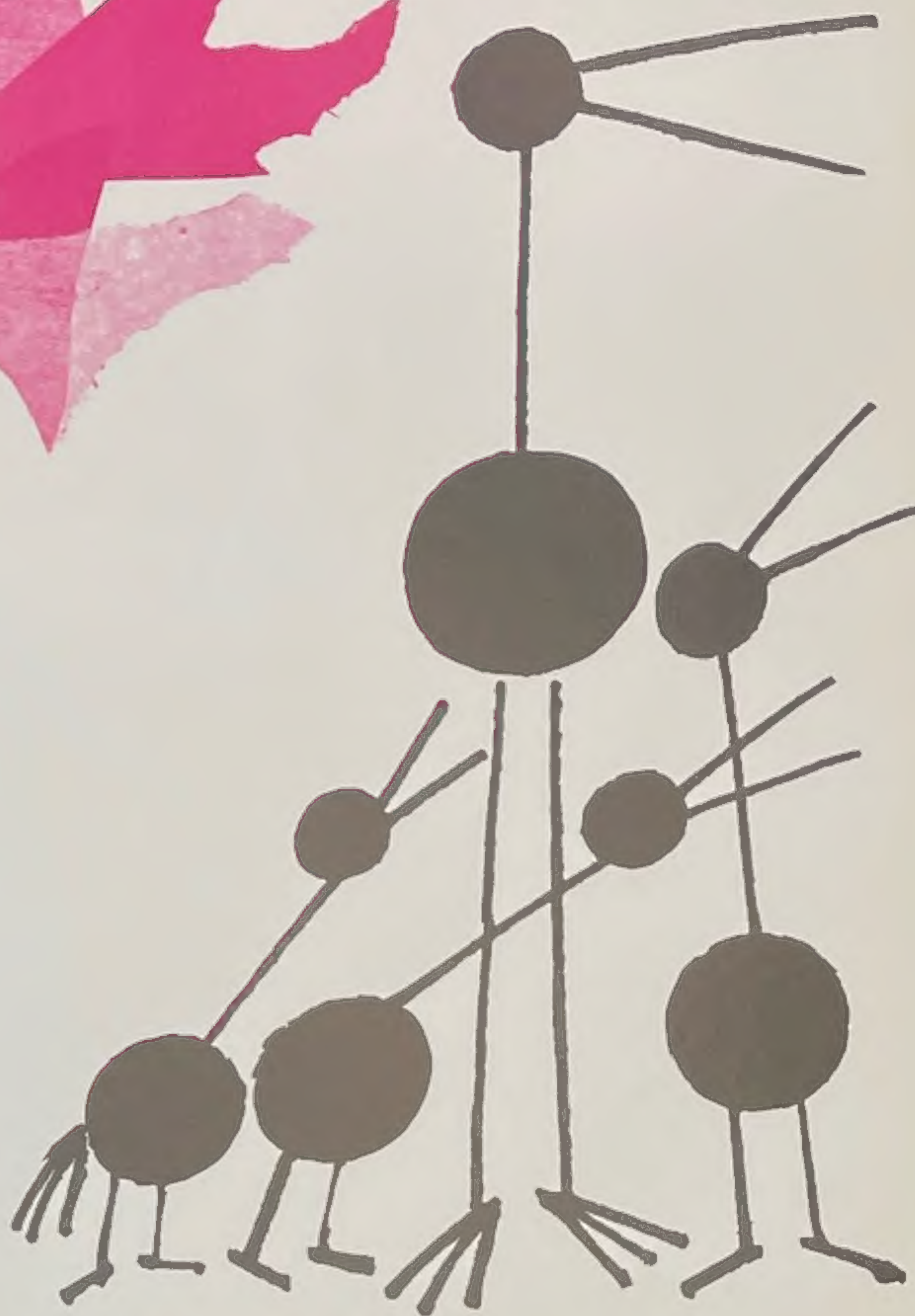
Cut and carefully tear tissue wrapping paper of delicate tints to fashion an ethereal angel, like the one above.

The drawing at right is made up entirely of your old friends, the dot and the line. Manipulate these basics (in ink or pencil) until they become a beguiling family portrait, like this one, or anything else you can think of.

Clearly, the gentleman below has a lot on his mind. Allow your artist's insight to show what goes on inside the head of a musician, an author, or a lawyer. Use type cut from magazines and newspapers, plus pencil drawing.

And don't forget just plain doodling: it can help you tell a story like the one about the loving couple at bottom right.

After you've completed these experiments, look around your house and see what else you can convert into art of spirit and originality.





Putting remnants to work

These bits of terry cloth, silk, cotton, wool, and felt don't have much in common — not even color or design. And, by itself, each is not very exciting. But keep a bag or carton of such oddments handy (as much fabric as you have room for, from cheesecloth to velvet).

Spread some of your hoardings out on a background of paper or cloth. Move the remnants around, cutting, arranging, and rearranging sizes, shapes, colors, and textures. Glue the scraps in place, when you arrive at a design you like. It might be a creation as bright and free as this fire bird. Or it might be a thing more solid and earthbound, depending on your materials and mood.





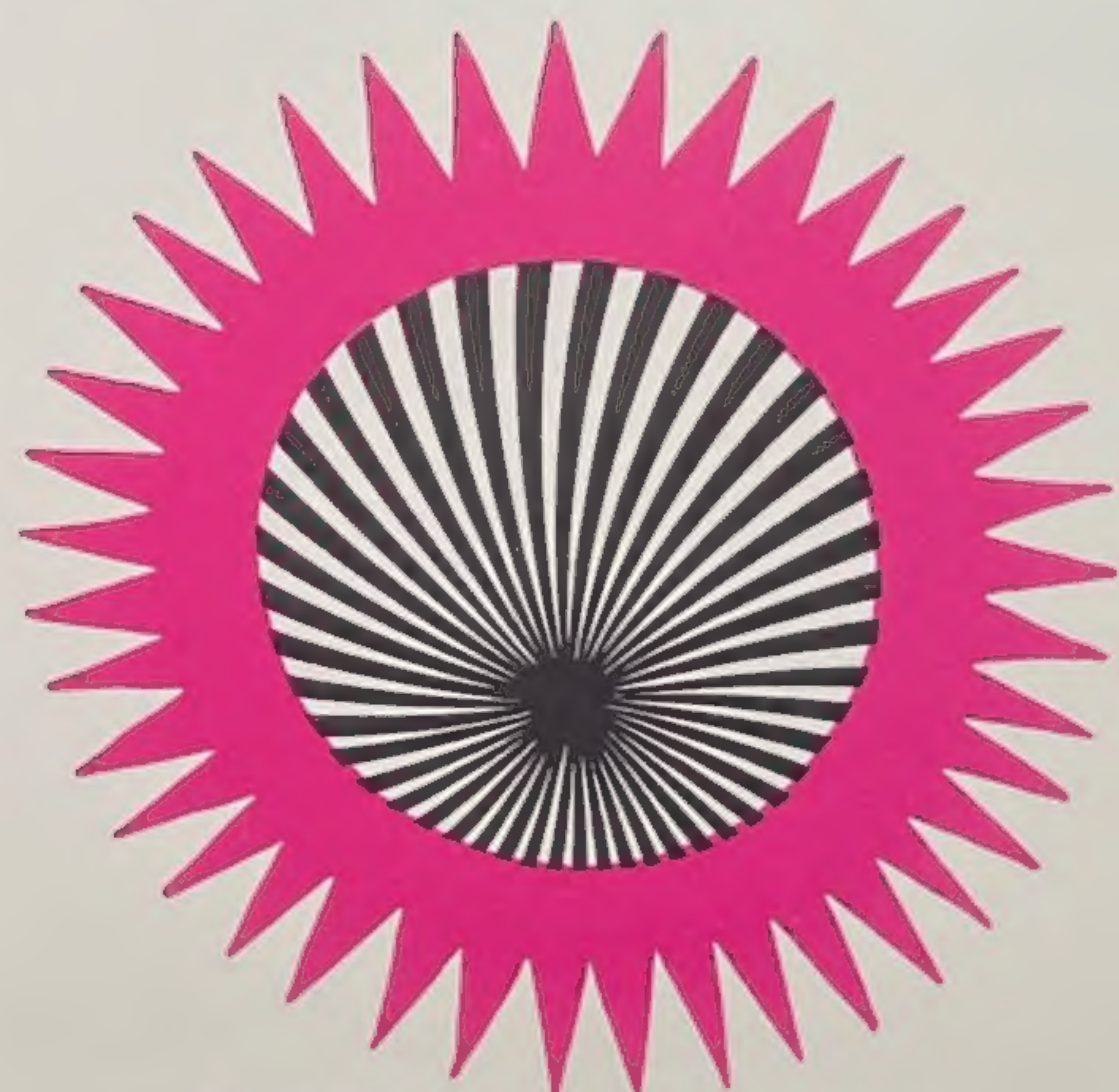
Make a wall hanging

This decoration had its beginnings in easily acquired nothings. Get a small windowshade; cut a piece of heavy cloth to fit, and glue it on.

The photo at the bottom of the page indicates tools and materials. If you use adhesive-backed patches, iron them in place. Glue other cutouts onto your background.

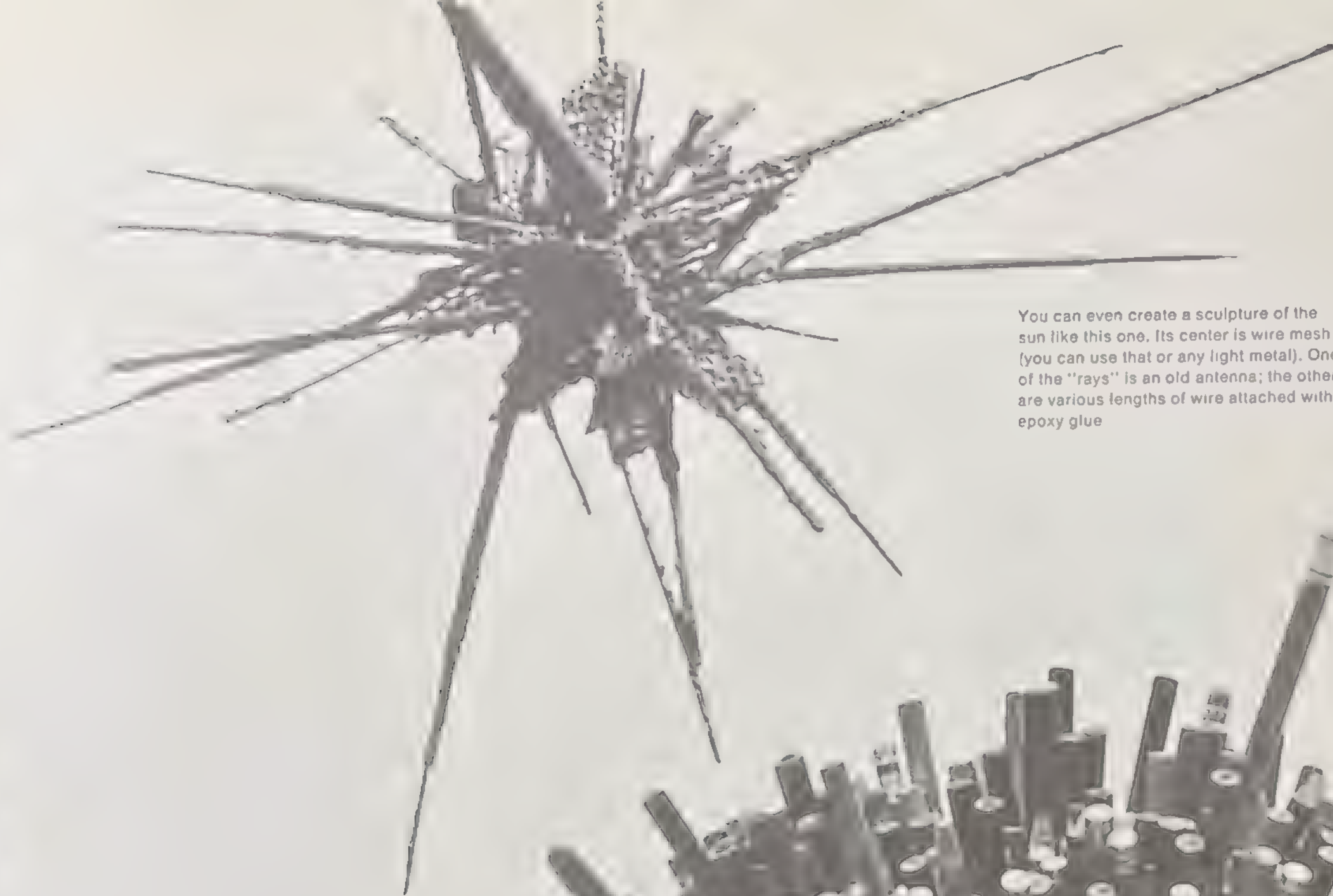
We covered the shade with felt, but you may use any material, of any color. (A remnant of velveteen, for instance, would give your scroll richness and depth.) And, of course, you don't have to make the signs of the Zodiac, as we did. You could illustrate a favorite story on your wall hanging, grow a flower garden, or portray your hobby. Decide first on your theme and keep your designs in harmony with it.





Look at all these examples — make one of each. Naturally, yours won't be exactly the same; they'll be done in *your* style. While you're on the subject, think of other methods and materials you can use to affirm that "the sun also rises."

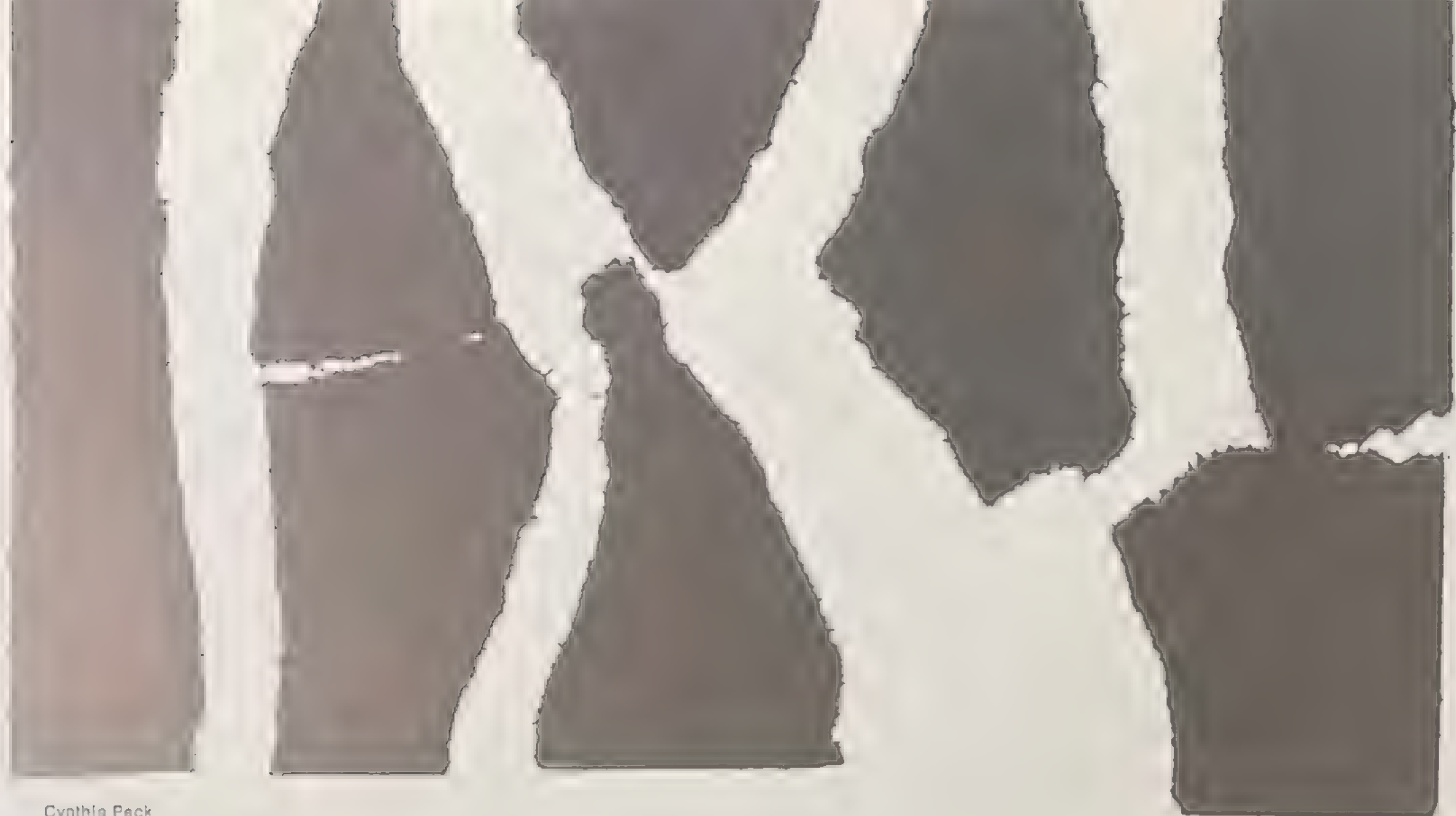




You can even create a sculpture of the sun like this one. Its center is wire mesh (you can use that or any light metal). One of the "rays" is an old antenna; the others are various lengths of wire attached with epoxy glue



To make the sun at right, we began by gluing together several pencil stubs, in a crisscross. We kept adding more worn-down pencils until the arrangement was complete. This is the kind of a project you could work on over a long period of time, whenever it suits your fancy and you've accumulated enough long, thin objects. You don't have to use pencils. Make your sun a collection of large nails, soda straws, popsicle sticks, ball-point pens that have run out of ink, and anything else you find that's appropriate.



Cynthia Peck



Suzanne Serreti

Laura Kalmin



Suzanne Serreti



Planning your designs

There is more to the two black-on-white pictures (created by high-school students) than what you see. They represent a challenging exercise we want you to try.

Get a square of black construction paper, about 6 x 6 inches. Plan your next move as you would a real campaign — because it will be. Cut or tear shapes from the paper, then reassemble them into a design, realistic or abstract.

So far it sounds easy but this is a controlled experiment with definite rules: You must put back every scrap you take from the black paper, and add nothing from any other source.

There will be spaces separating the shapes in your finished picture, so the design will be bigger than the 6 x 6-inch square you started with. But try to arrange the outer edges of your shapes so that you wind up, as you began, with a rectangle. Then glue the pieces down.

Do a lot of pictures this way — the more the better. The point of this assignment is that it will strengthen your sense of design.

Mosaics

Creating pictures from fragments of colored glass, stone, tile, and other materials is an ancient art, still practiced. Today you can even find three-dimensional mosaics: statues and buildings covered completely with chips of metal, jewelry, and marble.

The two mosaics (also made by students) are of more prosaic things, ranging from corn kernels to pieces of roofing. The spiraling design (*far left*) is unusual in that its curved effect is created by *straight* objects. For this mosaic the student cut lengths of spaghetti into very short strips and made them follow a curly path.

To make a mosaic artwork, first put your design — a drawing or collage — on practice paper. This is your “cartoon.” Don’t laugh! A cartoon isn’t always a funny picture; it’s also the generic term meaning a preliminary sketch for a tapestry, a fresco, or (in this case) a mosaic.

With the cartoon as your guide, transfer the design onto what will be the background of your mosaic. (Plywood and very heavy cardboard are excellent foundations.)

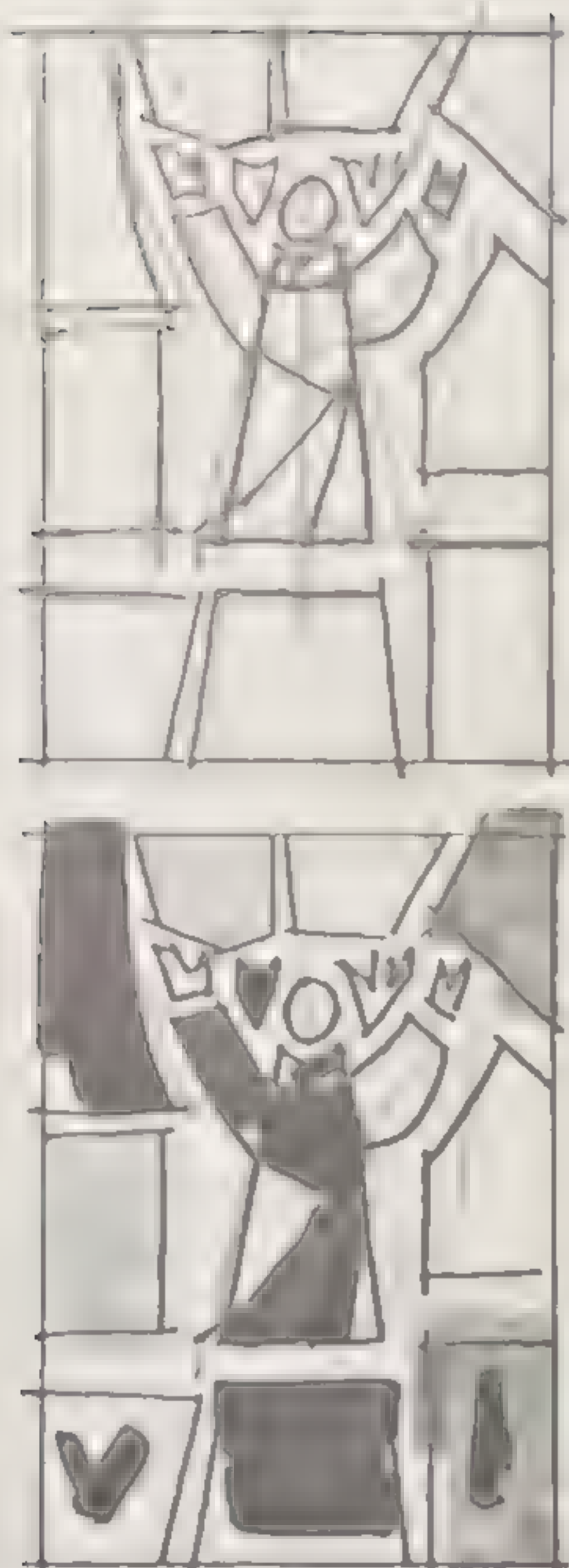
Now, give full play to your ingenuity. In assembling materials, try the effect of buttons, bits of linoleum, cloth, pins, old costume jewelry, cereal, dried beans, pebbles, feathers — the list of possibilities would be virtually endless!



Cut and torn paper



Adhesive backed tape



A collage by you

Here's a scene made with pieces of paper and adhesive-backed tape. It shows St. Francis of Assisi; the pictures surrounding him symbolize his love of little creatures.

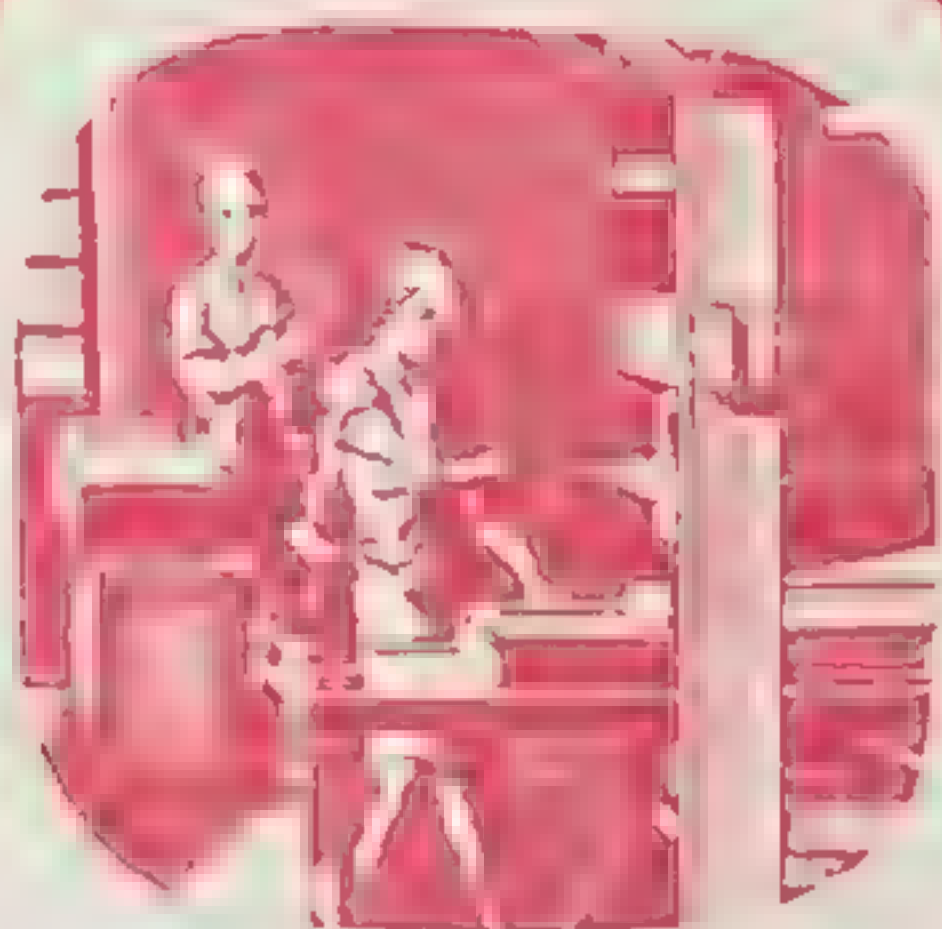
What can you think of that would make an exciting collage? When you've chosen your subject, follow these procedures to achieve the results you want:

First, make a cartoon to establish the placement and the size relationships of the major elements in your composition. In the next stage, plan the values. (See drawings above.)

When your practice work is completed, lightly pencil in the design on illustration board or heavy paper. Assemble your cut and torn shapes on the background, but don't paste them down until they are exactly where you want them to be.

The large, dominant shapes should be cut or torn from paper. Adhesive-backed cloth tape or plastic tape is excellent for details. Using a sharp, single-edge blade or a small pair of scissors, cut the little shapes and press them in place with your thumb.





An introduction to printing

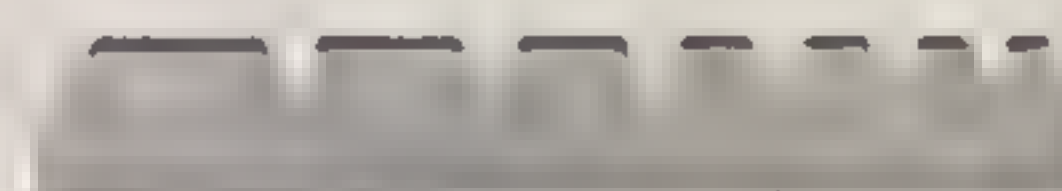
The design across the top of this page is based on a greatly enlarged printing screen. In the "dot" directly above, left, is a picture of a creaky antique press; it's like the one on which Benjamin Franklin printed his salty aphorisms for *Poor Richard's Almanac*. Today, "Little strokes fell great oaks" would be reproduced on a press like the modern one at the top of the page. This intricate machine would have seemed miraculous even to a man of Franklin's vision.

As an artist, you are naturally interested in reproduction methods. If you get a chance, visit a modern printing plant and watch a press in operation. Your excursion will be a voyage of discovery, in more ways than one. You'll find that, regardless of the tremendous strides in printing, the *principles* of reproducing art have remained the same since the days when Rembrandt was making his wonderful etchings. In employing the "art which preserves all the others" we have changed only details.

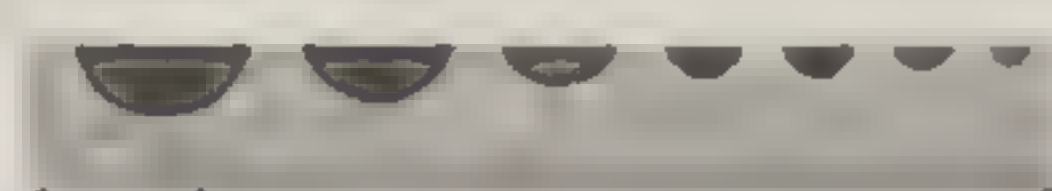
Basically there's only one way to transfer an inked image from one surface to another: *by contact*, involving various degrees of pressure. The rooster (*left*) is a woodcut, made by a process called *relief printing*. The artist carves away from a block of wood every area he does not want to appear in the print, leaving a raised design. Though uncomplicated and rudimentary, this method is used by many gifted craftsmen.

The primary methods

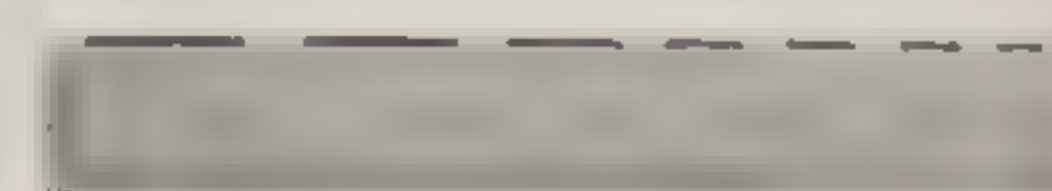
At right are diagrams showing three basic printing processes on which all variations are based



This indicates relief printing. The design on the block or plate is raised so that, when a roller charged with ink is passed over the surface, the ink can touch only the raised portions. This process — also commercially called letterpress — is the principle of rubber stamps, type, woodcuts, wood engravings, even fingerprints.



Intaglio printing describes the method used when the design is dug out — *below* the level of the plate. Ink is then put into the hollows and the print shows only what they hold. A great deal of pressure is applied to force the paper into the hollows to receive the ink. Variations of intaglio (from an Italian word meaning "to carve") are etchings, engravings, aquatints, mezzotints, and gravure.



Lithography is based on the principle that oil and water don't mix. The design is drawn on a flat stone or zinc plate with a grease crayon. The surface is treated with an acid, which etches the design; it's sponged with water, which is absorbed in all parts *not* drawn upon with the grease crayon. Still damp, the stone is inked with a roller. The ink is repelled by the wet areas and accepted by the greased ones. The image alone carries the ink. It's then printed on a lithographic press.



Wine Building, Ben Shahn
The Downtown Gallery, New York

Fine artists as printmakers

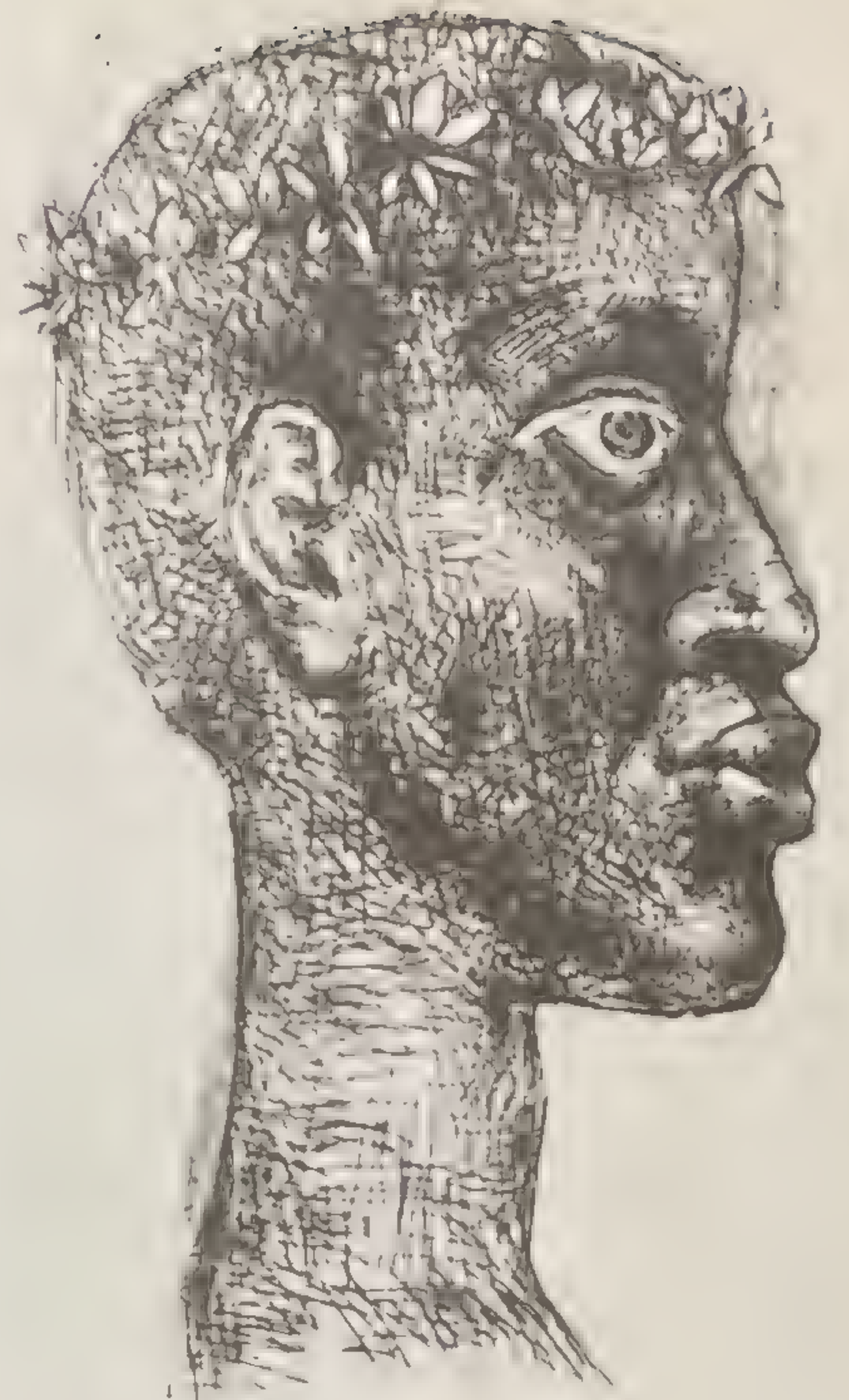
Great painters have also been involved in the graphics printing area of the arts. In the past Rembrandt, Dürer, and Toulouse-Lautrec made their own prints; so do artists of our day.

The serigraph (silk-screen print) above is by Ben Shahn. In this process, the image is forced onto paper or cloth through a piece of silk-thread, open-mesh cloth. The method can be compared in principle to stenciling. In a serigraph, pattern is a prominent feature.

At right is an etching by Picasso. Here the artist has made vigorous, free use of the *linear* character of the medium.

Below is a print by Faculty member Adolf Dehn. A renowned American watercolorist, Dehn is also recognized as a lithographer. This work shows that *tonal* qualities are typical of a lithographic reproduction.

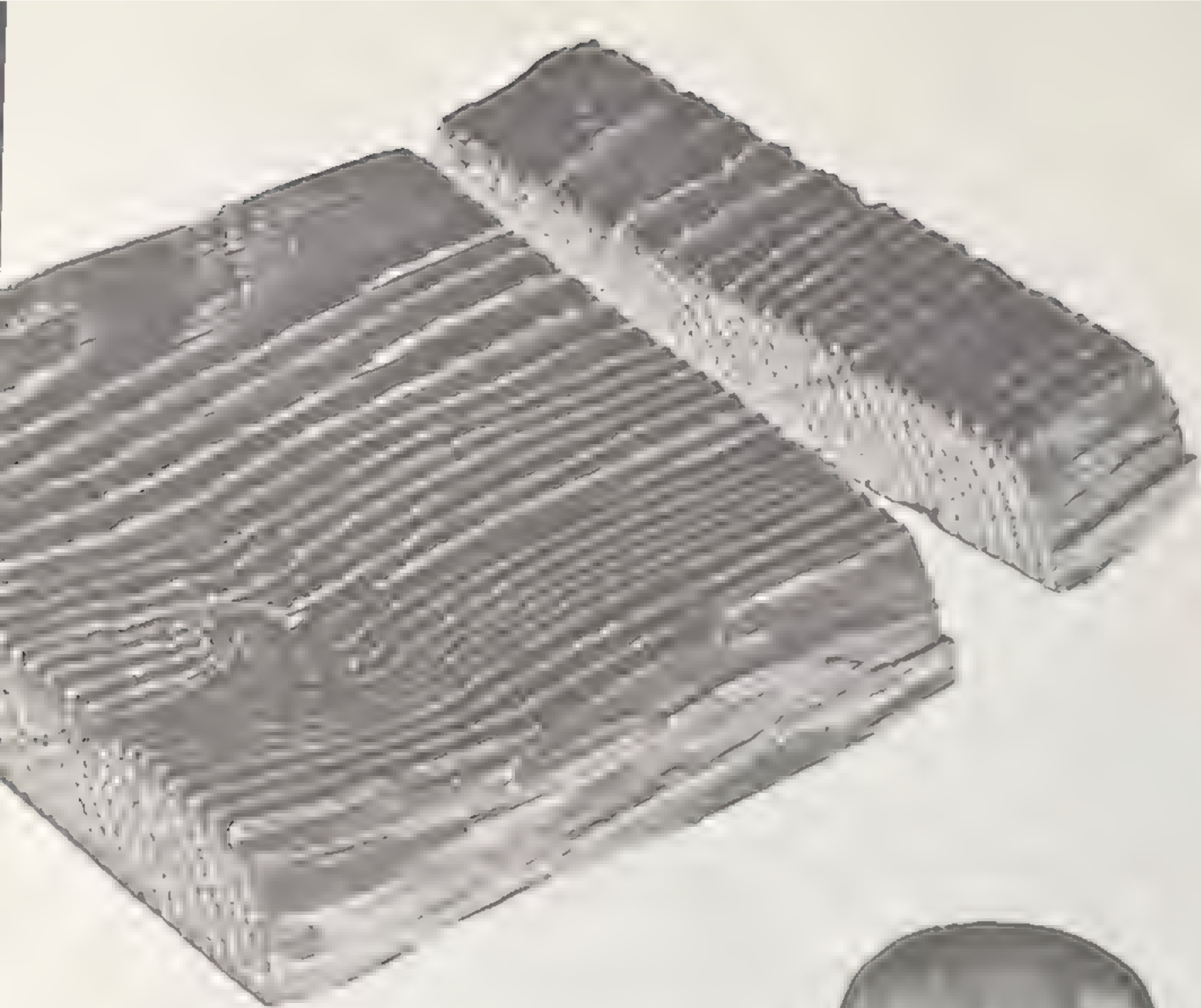
When an artist makes a print, he usually produces a limited edition. Each impression is numbered and signed by him. Therefore, each is considered an "original" work of art.



Frontispiece to *Amix*, Gustave by L. Kestel, 1911. Reproduction by permission SPADEN by French Republic. Rights reserved.



Sacred Ride, Adolf Dehn
Courtesy Pauline Engel



Now make your own prints

You'll need the tools and materials shown: oil paints or block-printing ink, a roller, a block of wood, a potato or Artgum eraser, a spoon or a wooden spatula.

Wood-block printing

First find a piece of wood with a wavy texture for your *printing block* or *plate*. (If it isn't as big as you want your finished print to be, don't worry.) Since the waves suggest water, plan a picture like ours, featuring a duck pond. Cut a two-inch piece from the wood and save it to make reeds. You should use block-printing paper — it's inexpensive and available at any art supply or stationery store. Cut a sheet of newspaper *exactly the same size as your print paper*. This is important: you'll line up the edges of the newspaper sheet with the print paper to help you register each print in the same position.

In the middle of the newspaper, draw an outline the length and width of your finished print, so you can place the block in the same spot each time you repeat the process. Then dampen the newspaper with a wet sponge, to prevent the block from sliding when you begin to print.

Apply color to the block. (If you use paint, be sure it's thick, not runny.) Brush it on, so it will cover the rough surface completely. Place the block, painted or inked side up, within the outlined area on the damp newspaper. Put your paper carefully on top of the block; align its edges with the edges of the newspaper. The print paper will stick to the prepared surface.

With the back of a spoon or a spatula, rub the paper against the block. Check your impression by lifting one corner of the print. When you're satisfied with the results, *gently* peel off the paper.

If your wood block is too short — like ours in the photo above — move it within the line you've drawn on the newspaper, place the blank part of your printing paper on the block, and rub again. *Be sure you always align the edges of the newspaper and printing paper.*

Then carve the duck shapes — in *relief* — on the potato or Artgum





eraser. Apply each one to a scrap of paper on which you've spread a good, thick layer of paint. Press the ducks firmly against the *dried* print. This is exactly the same as using a rubber stamp. (Check photo above.) Make the reeds: press the two-inch remnant of the block on your painted paper and then on the print so that the lines run *up and down*.

And now your picture is complete. You can make the same scene or *recreate* by using other colors or values for the water, the ducks, and *the reeds*.

Using a cardboard plate

Here's another way to make a relief print; it's especially suitable for *greeting cards*.

A portrait of the Roman god Janus (for whom January was named) makes an appropriate motif for a New Year's card — but design your own, if you want to.

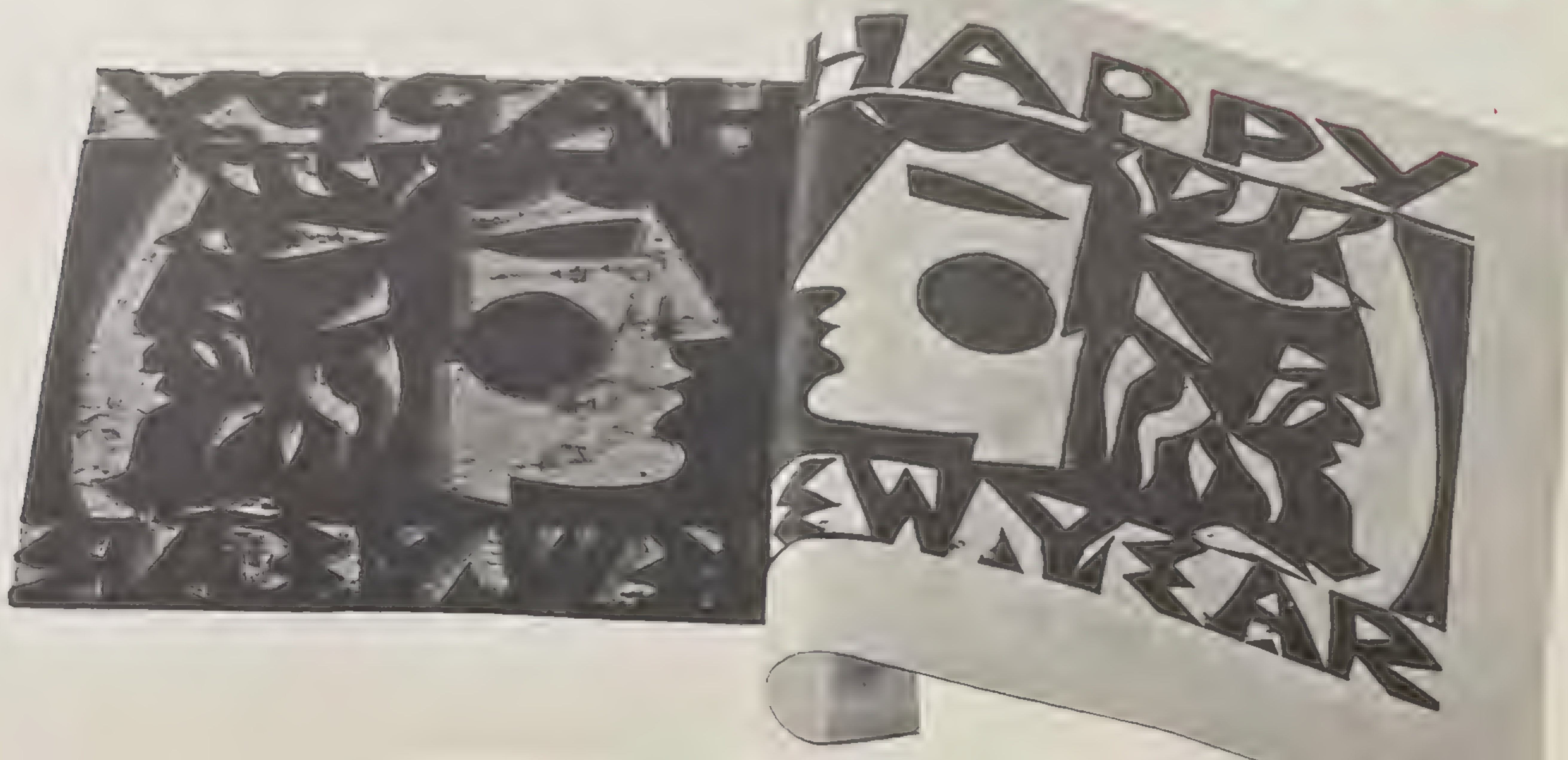
Draw your picture on tracing paper with a soft lead pencil. Place it face down on a piece of *thick, smooth* cardboard, like the back of a pad of drawing paper. Secure the tracing paper with pushpins or tape. Transfer your design by drawing firmly over the lines visible through the thin paper, then remove it. A *reverse* of the tracing paper picture will appear on the cardboard.

Cut along the outline of your design with a sharp mat knife, about halfway through the cardboard. Peel off areas you *don't* want printed. (Practice cutting and peeling on a scrap of cardboard first.)

Roll your color across the surface of the cardboard plate with a "brayer" (a roller used for spreading ink). The ink will cover the raised *printing* surface; the *peeled* areas will be white in your finished print.

Place your paper on top of the cut cardboard, rub, and you'll have the first of your greeting cards. Repeat as often as you wish.

This is a good way to make your own Christmas cards, valentines, labels, book plates, and anything you want to be a personal expression.





Designing a poster

Now that you're near the end of Section 12, you've discovered that you can create treasures by using common tools and the most ordinary materials. You've been involved in some complicated exercises. It's been fun—but the main thing is that you've been learning principles of design and using your imagination.

Let's stop a minute, and try solving a design problem together. You've been asked to make a poster, say, for a song festival at your school. You begin with the preliminary thinking, experimenting, and drawing that (we hope!) has become your habit.

For the first sketch, a folk singer holding a guitar seems natural and obvious. Several drawings later, as we keep trying for simplicity, the lady troubadour is reduced to a profile of her face. These pictures are all right—but maybe a full-face view will result in a stronger design?

The last picture—simple, strong—is what we're after. But where do we go from here? How about a collage? Big, uncluttered shapes are very readily attainable from cut and torn paper.

The poster at the bottom of this page evolves from the drawing. It's composed of three values: black, white and gray. A light gray rectangle, with an oval cut out for the mouth, is pasted on white illustration board. Strips of black paper are pasted on to define hair and the outline of a face. Eyes, nose, and lettering are inked in.

Following us so far, you're arriving at a design that should make you feel successful: using prosaic materials, you're making a dramatic, attractive poster.





But can it be made even better?

Recalling that we recommend continued investigation, let's consider the advantages of simplifying further. How about using only two values? Red and black are certainly an effective contrast. And let's try centering the message, instead of running it horizontally across the design.

We've finally arrived at the poster on this page. Except for the lettering, all of our singer is an assemblage of cut and pasted paper. Black shapes, pasted on red paper, describe her face. Red strips are pasted over the black to make her hair. Her "song" is lettered in with a brush. (You could use a

felt marker or a Speedball pen.)

Now you've proved that working with pieces of cut and torn paper releases your imagination. What's more, this medium prevents you from copying too literally from nature.

Consider collages when next you have an opportunity to design a poster for your school or club. Of course, you could use a variety of colors and shapes for your purpose. But having made one like this, you'll remember that you can create a most sophisticated and compelling design by using only two values — two colors — and a minimum of shapes.





Poster by Carl Zahn from *Fifty Years of Graphic Arts in America*
Courtesy Champion Papers



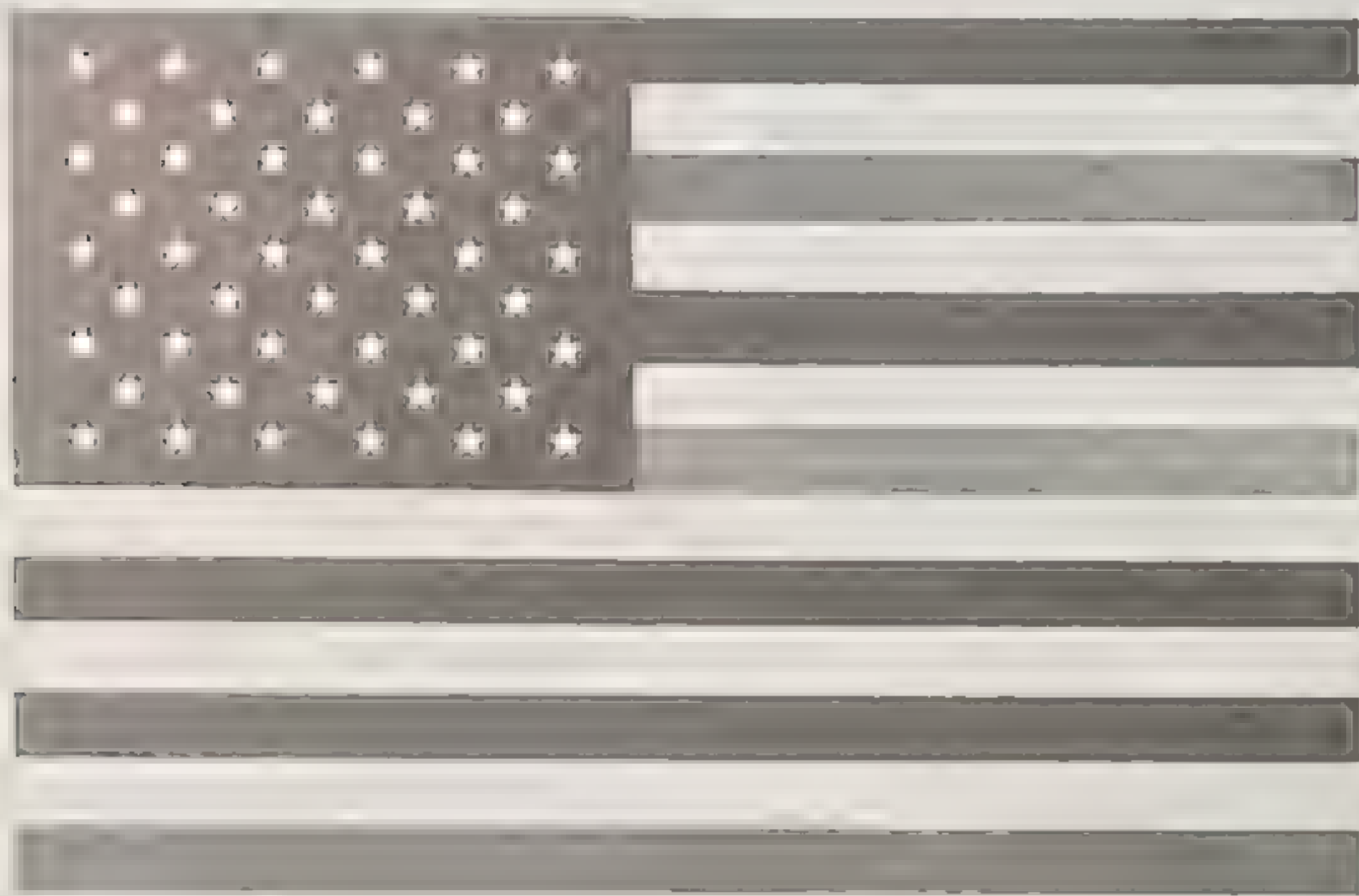
Poster by Fred Troller from *Fifty Years of Graphic Arts in America*
Courtesy Champion Papers

Same theme — different artists

Suppose you were asked to make a poster illustrating *Fifty Years of Graphic Arts in America*. If humor is your forte, you'd probably draw something like Tomi Ungerer's pathetic bird: most of his feathers have been stolen to make artists' quills. Or your picture might be more like Paul Rand's horse, who's looking backward at the history of the AIGA while he walks forward resolutely into the future.

To stress American art, Fred Troller adapted the stars and stripes to his design. So did Bradbury Thompson, but with a totally different effect. Carl F. Zahn created an overall dot design from an extreme enlargement of a printed image. He centered the 50-years message dramatically in the eye of the image.

In short, you can adopt any method you decide is your own way of saying what you want, no matter what your assignment is. As we've told you in previous lessons, you should always look beyond the obvious; there are innumerable ways of making the same artistic comment.



★
AIGA In respect to: 50 stellar years of
fostering American Graphic Arts
Bradbury Thompson

Poster by Tomi Ungerer from *Fifty Years of Graphic Arts in America*
Courtesy Champion Papers



Poster by Paul Rand from *Fifty Years of Graphic Arts in America*
Courtesy Champion Papers





© 1966, The Curtis Publishing Company

Same artist — different themes

George Giusti's work recalls poet Walt Whitman's prophecy: "The new world, the new times, the new vistas need a new tongue." Whitman was talking about language but his prediction applies to art, too.

All these covers are for the same magazine, but Giusti has employed special techniques to conjure up visions of different sections of the world.

It took imagination and skill to arrange the rope-anchor collage on a sandy background; to suggest, in three dimensions, the lure of the Mediterranean coast. And what more fitting way could an artist sum up an issue on France than by depicting the country's symbol, Marianne? But Giusti doesn't merely portray the lady: his fragments of a French journal, combined with a striking use of paint, hint of the numerous facets of a complex nation.

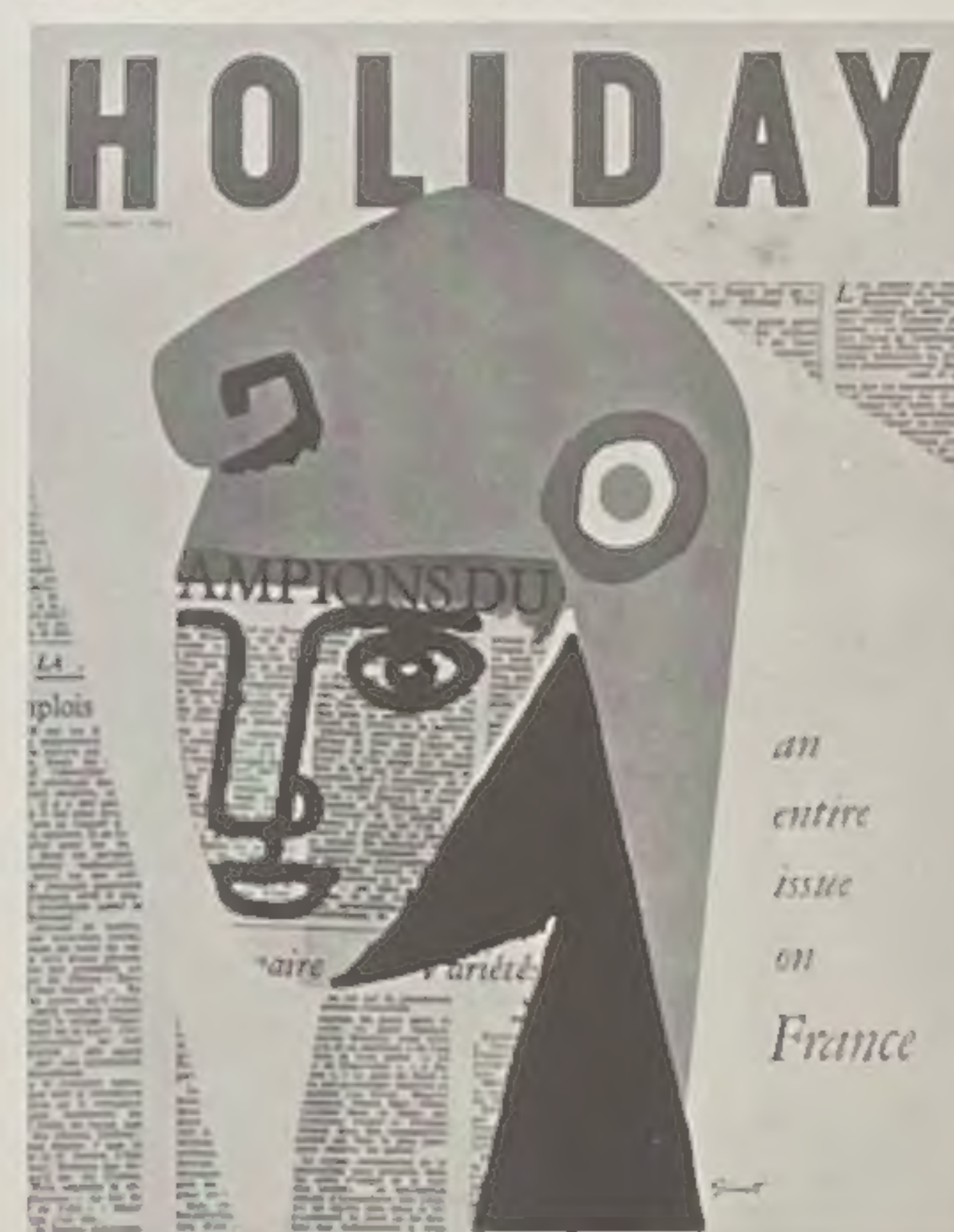
Certainly the tissue-collage shamrock is like none that ever grew, but it's suggestive of the beauty of Ireland and the spirit of her people. The steel helmet on the Scandinavian issue is evocative of Leif Ericson, the Vikings, the whole flavor of those Northern countries.

We've stressed that you should always search for the revealing symbol. These covers show how you can use the symbol in ways that are meaningful to you.

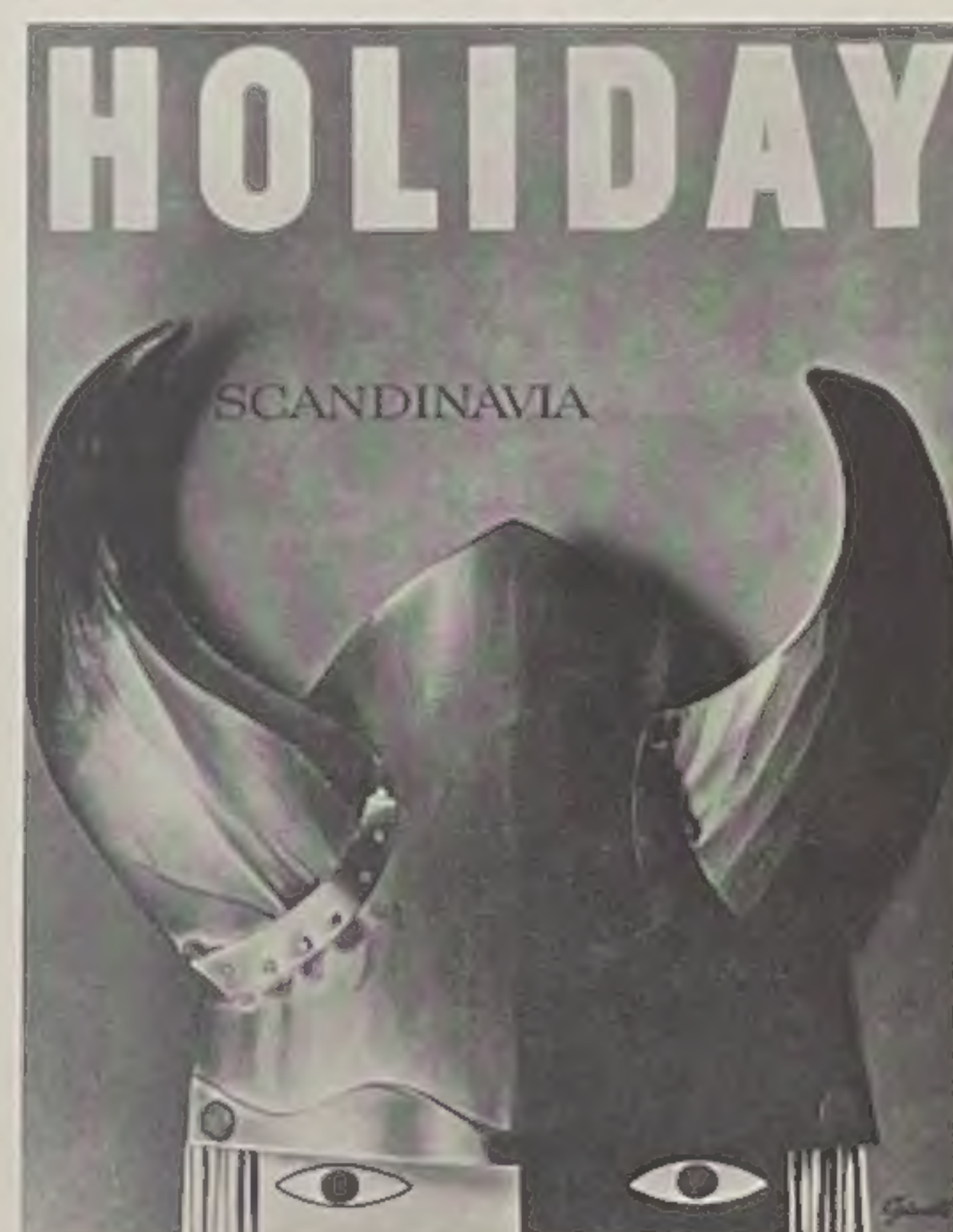
© 1963, The Curtis Publishing Company



© 1957, The Curtis Publishing Company



© 1966, The Curtis Publishing Company



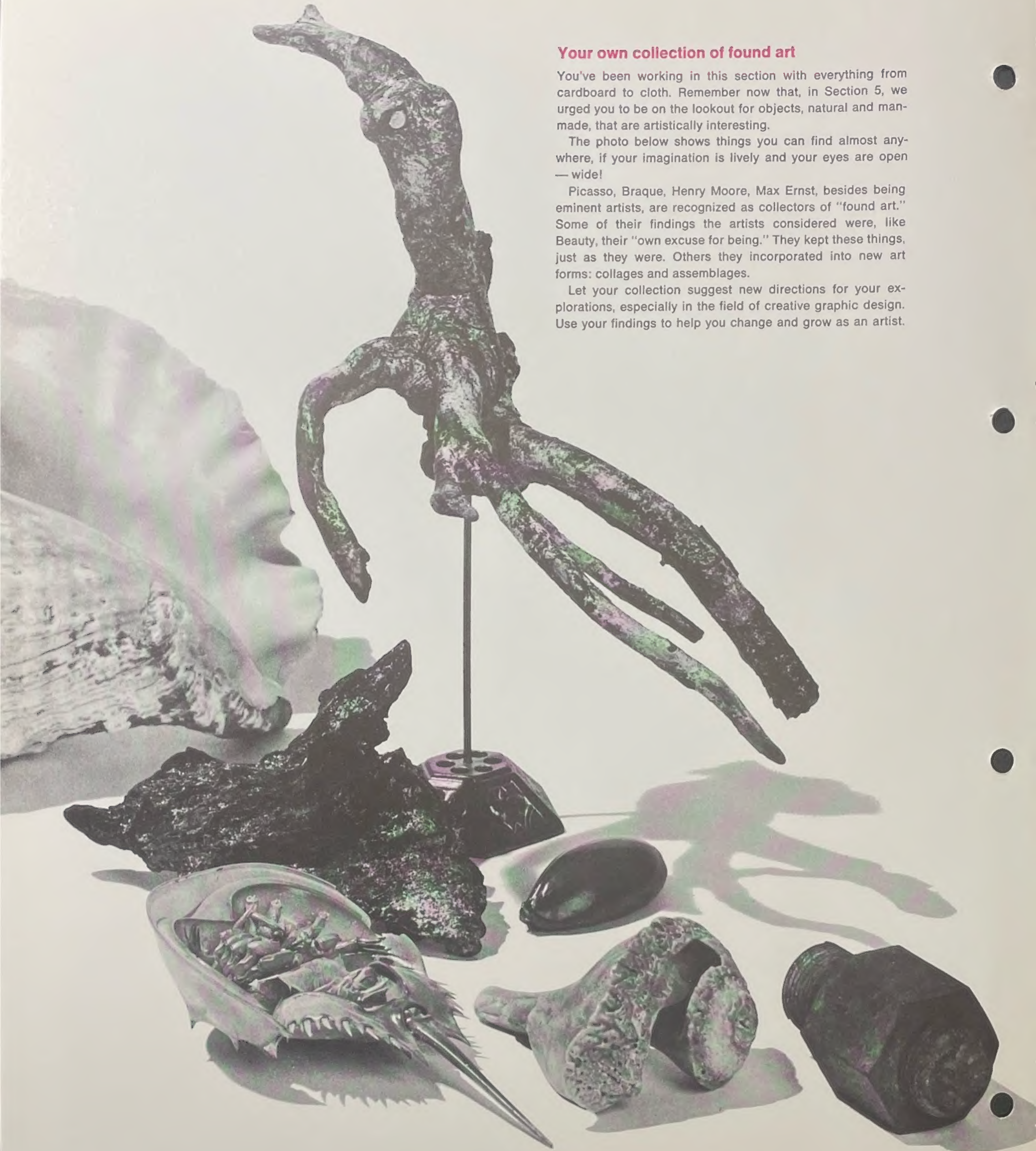
Your own collection of found art

You've been working in this section with everything from cardboard to cloth. Remember now that, in Section 5, we urged you to be on the lookout for objects, natural and man-made, that are artistically interesting.

The photo below shows things you can find almost anywhere, if your imagination is lively and your eyes are open — wide!

Picasso, Braque, Henry Moore, Max Ernst, besides being eminent artists, are recognized as collectors of "found art." Some of their findings the artists considered were, like Beauty, their "own excuse for being." They kept these things, just as they were. Others they incorporated into new art forms: collages and assemblages.

Let your collection suggest new directions for your explorations, especially in the field of creative graphic design. Use your findings to help you change and grow as an artist.



Important

These instructions are extremely important to you. Read them through carefully from start to finish. Do your assignment work only after you have done the practice exercises in Section 12. Pay particular attention to the projects on pages 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 16, and 17. Do not send these projects to the School.

"Techniques and materials are only tools to express your idea. Don't become so fascinated by techniques that you fool yourself into believing they can replace thinking a design through — they never can." George Giusti

To send to the School

Section 12 assignment work

Here is a chance to really use your imagination and do something exciting both in color and design.

You have already experimented with printmaking in this section (pages 16 and 17) and in Section 2 (monoprints, page 14). See what you can do now with printing to create one of the three designs below. You may, if you wish, combine printing with rubbings (Section 1, pages 10 and 11). Let's see how inventive you can be.

For your assignment, do only *one* of the following. Choose the one that appeals to you the most and design it carefully — don't rush it.

- 1 A calendar design symbolizing the four seasons
- 2 Your personal Christmas card
- 3 A design suitable for a fabric

If you choose to do No. 3, work with a few simple colors and use *one* of the following motifs:

- a) sailing
- b) sun
- c) circus
- d) birds

Identify the use you have in mind for this fabric design — that is, dress, drapery, upholstery, etc.

You may work with any medium you wish as long as you work in color. The size should be no larger than 16 x 20 inches.

Print on the back of your design:

Your name
Student number
Address
Assignment number

(over, please)

Cut along this line — and mail with your assignment

Comment sheet

In the space below, write a brief description of your design.

Name Student number

Date

Check before mailing

Your assignment carton should contain:

- 1 design in color no larger than 16 x 20 inches
- 1 comment sheet (on other side of this page)
- 1 shipping label filled out completely with your name and address

Mail this carton to:

Famous Artists School

Westport, Connecticut 06880

Note: Be *sure* your art is thoroughly dry before mailing.